

Message Text

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FOR ANDREWS FROM WORTZEL

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JIMMY'S YEAR NO. 1

1. TWELVE MONTHS AGO, ON THE DAY OF HIS INAUGURATION, WHEN JIMMY CARTER STRODE FROM CAPITAL HILL TOWARD THE WHITE HOUSE, INSTEAD OF RIDING AS ALL HIS PREDECESSORS, MILLIONS OF TV VIEWERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD BEGAN TO THINK ABOUHUTHIS UNUSUAL PRESIDENT. A WAVE OF GREAT EXPECTATION WAS SET OFF.

2. BUT THE SPACE OF A YEAR IN POLITICS, WHICH PARTICULARLY IN AMERICA CAN BE A HARSH GAME AND PROFESSION, REPRESENTS A LONG TIME. BUT IN THE YEAR'S TIME SINCE THAT NICE CEREMONY, IN WHICH THE NEW INHABITANT OF THE WHITE HOUSE CHARMED HIS FELLOW AMERICANS AND OTHER VIEWERS WITH HIS GESTURE, A GOOD DEAL OF THE GLOW AND THOSE EXPECTATIONS HAS DISAPPEARED. ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE 39TH PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. A GOOD MANY OBSERVERS HAVE DEVOTEDLY TAKEN UP THEIR LOOKING GLASSES TO ASSESS AND CONJECTURE -- WHAT'S BAD ABOUT JIMMY,

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AND WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT HIM.

3. THERE IS NOTHING NEW IN THIS -- IT REPRESENTS THE LONG-ACCEPTED AMERICAN PRACTICE OF EXPOSING PUBLIC FIGURES COMPLETELY TO THE PUBLIC VIEW. THERE WAS NOTHING NEW FOR THE MOST RECENT TENANT OF THE WHITE HOUSE IN THE NEWS THAT HIS POPULARITY HAD DROPPED IN HIS FIRST YEAR, FOR THE SAME EXPERIENCE

ONLY JOHN KENNEDY SUCCEEDED IN RETAINING HIS ORIGINAL POPULARITY. IT WAS SOMEWHAT MORE UNPLEASANT TO DISCOVER THAT HE HAD DROPPED MORE THAN ALL OF THESE PREDECESSORS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF HIS IMMEDIATE PREDECESSOR, PRESIDENT FORD. AFTER THE RADIANT GLOW OF A YEAR AGO, IT WAS NOT EASY TO GET INFORMED OF IMPENDING MEDICRITY.

4. BUT THIS WAS THE LIGHT IN WHICH CARTER'S FIRST 12 MONTHS IN THE PRESIDENT'S CHIA WERE VIEWED BY ALL THOSE PROCLAIMED AND SELF-PROCLAIMED OBSERVERS, SYMBOLIZED IN THE NAME OF DR. GALLUP. MOREOVER, ONE OF THEM FOUND THAT 61 OUT OF EVERY 100 AMERICANS DISAGREED WITH CARTER'S ECONOMIC STRATEGY, ALTHOUGH THE U.S. INFLATION RATE OF 7 PERCENT IS ONE OF THE LOWEST IN THE WORLD, AND ALTHOUGH THE JOBLESS RATE IS SOMEWHAT UNDER THAT FIGURE.

5. IN A WAY THIS IS THE GREATEST SURPRISE COMING AFTER THE FIRST QUARTER OF CARTER'S FOUR-YEAR PRESIDENTIAL TERM, BUT ACCORDING TO ALL INDICATIONS, THERE EXISTS A REASON: DUE TO HIS STATEMENTS IN THE PAST, CARTER WAS EXPECTED TO BE A DOMESTICALLY ORIENTED PRESIDENT. BUT WHETHER HE LIKES IT OR NOT, HIS FELLOW AMERICANS SEE HIM AS ORIENTED TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

6. BE THAT AS IT MAY, ONE WOULD HARDLY HAVE EXPECTED A MAN WHO LARGEY WON HIS CAMPAIGN WITH HIS PERMANENT SMILE AND UNCLASSIFIED

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ASSUMED THE MANTLE OF THE "EXCITING OUTSIDER" TO BE DESCRIBED ON HIS FIRST ANNIVERSARY AS A RATHER UNINTERESTING NEWCOMER. BUT THIS IS PRECISELY HOW CARTER APPEARS IN AN ARTICLE BY JAMES RESTON, THE MOST EMINENT WRITER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES: "THE REASONS USUALLY GIVEN FOR CARTER'S SKIDDING IN YEAR-END REVIEWS ARE: HE HAS CREATED THE IMPRESSION THAT HE IS AUTHORITARIAN, THAT HE IS ISOLATED AND REMOTE TO PUSH HIS PROGRAMS THROUGH CONGRESS, THAT HE TRIES TO DO TOO MUCH TOO FAST AND THEN WITHDRAWS TOO FAR WHEN HE ENCOUNTERS RESISTANCE, AND FINALLY THAT HE SIMPLY IS NOT VERY EXCITING, AND IS EVEN A BIT BORING. SOMETIMES HE CONCENTRATES ON CUTTING UNEMPLOYMENT, THEN TRIES TO REDUCE INFLATION, AND IN THE PROCESS CONFUSES BIG LABOR AND BIG BUSINESS. PARADOXICALLY, HE APPEARS ON TELEVISION AND IN INTERVIEWS WITH REPORTERS AND CONGRESSMEN MORE THAN ANY OTHER PRESIDENT WE CAN RECENTLY RECALL, BUT SEEN WITH THEM HE SOMEHOW LEAVES THE IMPRESSION THAT HE DOES NOT HEAR THEM. OR AT LEAST THEY THINK SO. HE HAS ALSO ATTEMPTED TO DO TOO MUCH TOO FAST WITHOUT A SENSE FOR WHAT IS IMPORTANT AND WITHOUT THINKING OF ESTABLISHING INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN ONE PROGRAM AND ANOTHER."

7. TO FOREIGNERS, THIS MANNER OF DISCUSSING THE FIRST CITIZEN OF THE COUNTRY IS QUITE SURPRISING, FOR BY AND LARGE THIS AMERICAN OPENNESS DOES NOT EXIST ELSEWHERE. JIMMY CARRTER IS CERTAINLY NOT SURPRISED, BUT HE MUST BE UPSET BY THE IDEA THAT HIS PORTRAIT CAN APPEAR SO UNATTRACTIVE JUST A YEAR AFTER HE EXPERIENCED ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE TRIUMPHS IN U.S. ELECTORAL HISTORY-- DEFEATING THE INCUMBANT AS A RELATIVELY UNKNOWN CONTENDER. BUT JIMMY CARTER APPEARS TO BE AN UNUSUAL-LY RARE CASE OF A PRESIDENT WHO HAD BEEN MOST FEARED BY FOREIGNERS, U.S. ALLIS, AND WHO THEN GOT ALONG BETTER WITH THE FOREIGN PUBLIC THAN THE DOMESTIC ONE.

8. THE FEARS OUTSIDE AMERICA AROSE PRIMARILY DUE TO CAR-
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TER'S LACK OF EXPERIENCE IN WORLD AFFAIRS AND DUE TO FEARS THAT IN THE WHITE HOUSE CARTER WOULD BECOME WHAT USUALLY PLEASES AMERICANS BUT DISMAYS EUROPEANS -- A CRUSADING PRESIDENT. THESE FEARS GREW ALL THE MORE WHEN CARTER ASSUMED THIS STYLE AND, IN CONTRAST TO THE "PRACTICAL POLITICIAN," ADDRESSED THE WORLD AROUND HIMSELF IN THE STYLE OF A CRUSADER -- REGARDLESS OF WHETHER HE WAS SPEAKING ABOUT WHAT AMERICANS SHOULD DO IN REGARD TO THE NEW ENERGY PROGRAM OR ABOUT WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IN REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS.

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9. IT SOON TURNED OUT THAT THE NEW PRESIDENT EASILY TURNED INTO A PRACTICAL POLITICIAN WHO COULD MORE EASILY WIN OVER THE ALLIES TO HIS STRATEGIES THAN WIN THE SYMPATHY OF THE U.S. PUBLIC FOR HIS TAX STRATEGY. THE PREVAILING U. S. VIEW IS THAT HE GETS ALONG BETTER WITH FOREIGN STATESMEN THAN WITH HIS OWN SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN. ONE OF THE PRESIDENT'S CAPITOL HILL CRITICS SHOUTED ONCE, "IF CARTER GOT ALONG AS WELL WITH VERNON JORDAN (PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE) AS HE DOES WITH JULIUS NYERERE (TANZANIAN PRESIDENT), HIS DOMESTIC PROGRAMS WOULD BE MUST CLOSER TO SUCCESS."

10. AMERICAN CRITICS USUALLY FORGET THAT THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT IS INITIALLY SUBJECTED TO DOUBTS ON THE PART OF U.S. PRECISELY BECAUSE HE IS LAUDED SO HIGHLY BY HIS FELLOW AMERICANS: HE SEEMS TO BE A TOO "AMERICAN" PRESIDENT. A U.S. PRESIDENT WHO IS UNWILLING TO TRAVEL ALWAYS AROUSES DISDAIN ABROAD FOR BEING INTERESTED ONLY IN DOMESTIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS AND PERMITTING THEM TO DETERMINE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. AND VICE VERSA, A PRESIDENT WHO MANIFESTS INTEREST IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD AND TRAVELS SEEMS TO BE BEHAVING IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE MANNER IN THE EYES OF ALLIES.

11. IT WAS WITH THIS IN MIND THAT JIMMY CARTER, AT THE POINT
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OF TRANSITION FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW YEAR, DEPARTED ON HIS TOUR OF SIX COUNTRIES, TRAVERSING THE GREAT DISTANCE OF INDIA TO FRANCE, IN THE DESIRE TO HALT THE NOTABLE DECLINE IN CONFIDENCE IN HIM AS A WORLD LEADER. AS SO OFTEN HAPPENS ON THESE CLUMSY TRAVELS WITH SO MANY AIDES IN ATTENDANCE AND REPORTERS, THERE WERE A LOT OF BIZARRE FEATURES: THE GAFFE OF THE PRESIDENT'S INTERPRETER IN POLAND, THE "INDISCREET" MICROPHONE IN INDIA, AND THE CROSSED RADIO-WAVES IN PARIS, WHICH LED TO A SITUATION IN WHICH A SINGER AT A FAMOUS NIGHT CLUB CAUGHT THE INSTRUCTIONS OF CARTER'S BODYGUARDS AS SHE WAS SINGING. THE EUROPEAN LEFT ISSUED AN ANGRY PROTEST TO THE EFFECT THAT THE DISTINGUISHED TRAVELLER MADE HIS BIGGEST GAFFE WHEN HE ADVISED FRENCH SOCIALISTS AGAINST ENTERING INTO AN ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNISTS, THUS EXERCISING IMPERMISSIBLE INTERFERENCE IN THE AFFAIRS OF OTHERS, IF SOMEWHAT MORE DISCREETLY THAN THE NOTORIOUS HENRY KISSINGER.

12. BUT ALL IN ALL, THE WESTERN ALLIES, FOR WHOM THE U.S. PRESIDENT IS INEVITABLY THE FIRST LEADER, ACKNOWLEDGE THAT OUTSIDE THE U.S. CARTER "AUGMENTED THE PRESIDENTIAL DIMENSION," AND THAT HE IS RIGHT IN HIS INTENTION IN THE NEW YEAR TO CONCENTRATE ON THREE FOREIGN-POLICY OBJECTIVES: TO ARRIVE AT A

STRATEGIC ARMS AGREEMENT WITH THE RIVAL SUPERPOWER, TO AID
PEACE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND TO ACHIEVE
THE MORE SUCCESSFUL SETTLEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS.

13. SINCE NO U.S. PRESIDENT CAN SUCCEED ABROAD IF HE DOES
NOT SUCCEED AT HOME, ALL CRITICS OF JIMMY'S FIRST YEAR BELIEVE
THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL HAVE TO WIN THE CONFIDENCE OF HIS
FELLOW AMERICANS IN THE MANNER MOST UNDERSTANDABLE TO THEM:
TO CONVINCE THEM THAT HE IS CAPABLE OF MANAGING THE U.S.
ECONOMY, AND AS HE HAS ALREADY ANNOUNCED,
TO PROTECT AND STRENGTHEN THE U.S. DOLLAR.
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14. AFTER HIS FIRST 12 MONTHS IN THE WHITE HOUSE, JIMMY
CARTER IS -- TO HIS FELLOW AMERICANS AND TO THE ALLIES --
NEITHER SO EASILY DECEIVED, SKILLED, OR SUCCESSFUL AS HE ONCE
APPEARED WHEN HE MOVED INTO THE PRESIDENTIAL HOME. BUT THIS
WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE, FOR AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN IS ONE THING,
PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IS ANOTHER. BUT HE IS NO LONGER AS
UNKNOWN AS HE WAS JUST BEFORE HIS ELECTION, WHEN THE MENTION
OF HIS NAME AROUSED THE RESPONSE, "JIMMY WHO?" THE NEW
SAYING ABOUT HIMMY IS "HE LEARNS FAST."

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